

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA RECOVERY SITE 31SP300*1*
CLEAR RUN BLACKSMITH-COOPER SHOP
SAMPSON COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
(TIP B-1381, FEDERAL AID PROJECT BRSTP-411(1))

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Introduction

Coastal Carolina Research, Inc., conducted archaeological data recovery investigations of the blacksmith-cooper shop (31SP300*1*) associated with the Clear Run National Register Historic Site (#1181 or 31SP300), for the proposed replacement of Bridge 14 on NC 411 over the Black River between Garland and Harrells, in Sampson County, North Carolina. The study was conducted for the Planning and Environmental Branch of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA-PL89-665); the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's regulations for compliance with Section 106, codified as 36 CFR Part 800; and Section 4(f) of the Federal Transportation Act. The scope of the investigations was consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Historic Preservation Projects* (Federal Register, Vol. 48, No. 190, September 1983, P. 44716-44742, et seq.). The excavations were conducted in accordance with a scope of work (SOW) and data recovery plan prepared by the North Carolina Department of Transportation and dated July 15, 1996.

Description of the Project Area

The project area is located on the north side of NC 411 on the west bank of the Black River. Clear Run Plantation was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1985, and site 31SP300*1* was listed as a component of this site. Archaeological investigations were conducted at the site on December 8, 1993, and August 23-25, 1994, by archaeologists from the NCDOT in order to assess the potential effects of the bridge replacement on the site (Gray 1994a, Gray 1994b). It was recommended that data recovery be conducted to collect the information important to the understanding of the historic property in order to avoid an adverse effect under Section 106 of the NHPA to the site from the replacement of the bridge.

The analysis of the artifacts associated with the shop, mostly metal, will add to our current knowledge of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century life along the Black River. This was an area that played an important role in the transportation of goods, particularly naval stores, to and from Wilmington before the advent of the railroad in the area. A. J. Johnson (1843-1914) was the original owner and founder of Clear Run. Prior to owning Clear Run, Johnson was in the Confederate Army and was captured at the Battle of Spotsylvania in 1864. He was kept as a prisoner of war for a year. Later he became one of the area's leading merchants and industrialists, farming 1,700 acres and owning a turpentine distillery, general store, furniture store, cotton gin, riverboats,

gristmill, and blacksmith shop. In addition, he served as postmaster at Clear Run, as a Sampson County commissioner, as a justice of the County Court, and as a director of the Bank of Clinton (Butchko 1985).

Methods

The purpose of the data recovery was to record the significant archaeological and historical information available at the site before the construction of the bridge and consequent destruction of the site.

The project required 147.5 person-days and was conducted from January 23 to February 21, 1997. It was necessary to clear the site prior to excavation due to the preponderance of vines, shrubs, and trees. This was completed January 23-24, 1997, and required eight of the 147.5 person-days to complete. Clearing revealed the piles of timbers previously recorded by NCDOT archaeologists. These timbers were associated with the blacksmith-cooper shop and were mapped at their surface locations before excavation.

Background Research

Research was conducted to see if it was possible to determine who worked in the shop. Other questions considered during the analysis included whether the shop served the entire community of this part of Sampson County or only Clear Run, and whether or not the work was seasonal.

Results

The total area under study was approximately 6,455 square feet (600 m²), although the core of the site was previously estimated at 2,700 square feet by NCDOT archaeologists. Ten 10-x-10-foot and four 5-x-5-foot units were hand excavated within the Area of Potential Effect (APE). Seventeen features were excavated, most completely, although a few of the postholes were only bisected. A majority of the blacksmith-cooper shop was excavated during the project, as evidenced by the presence of floor joists for a shed building, and a separate dirt-floor furnace area. Excavation of units beyond the core of the site yielded minimal evidence that the site extended beyond these boundaries.